

# AMIR MUHAMMAD, THE JURY SPEAKS

*Amir Muhammad is an established filmmaker and writer who has released a number of critically acclaimed over the years. His documentaries such as "The Big Durian (2003)" and "Malaysian Gods (2009)" were featured in several international films such as IFFR and Vancouver International Film Festival. This Malaysian talent was chosen as a member of the Jury for the 'Hivos Tiger Competition' award at this year's IFFR's main segment.*

**Rafi :** Thank you for giving me the time. So tell me about your experience at IFFR. You have been a part of IFFR so many times.

**Amir Muhammad:** Yes, this was my third time.

**Rafi:** As a Jury?

**Amir Muhammad:** No, the first two times were as a filmmaker with films in the program. And one was as doing a kind of installation.

**Rafi:** How many films have you made?

**Amir Muhammad:** I have lost count of the movies I have made of my own. Maybe, seven or eight. And they were mainly documentaries.

**Rafi:** Do you have any specialization or any kind of focus when it comes to film making?

**Amir Muhammad:** I tend to pick local topics and local areas. The kind areas that are not normally shown in mainstream representation.

**Rafi:** So are they all political?

**Amir Muhammad:** Yeah, they are all political to a certain extent. It depends on how you want to define politics, basically.

**Rafi:** You know I have met one of the Indonesian short film directors. He called you the best film maker. Do you agree

with him?

**Amir Muhammad:** Indonesians like to flatter people. Because they are very friendly. So they like to make other people comfortable by saying nice things. That is an Indonesian trait.

**Rafi:** You are in the jury for the main program this year. So can you tell me how were the movies that came this year, or how they were selected?

**Amir Muhammad:** We had to watch a total of 8 films and had to select one winner and one jury prize. We have seen 7 out of 8 so far.

**Rafi:** How many panels of juries are there?

**Amir Muhammad:** There are five. There is no head and we decide through discussion and select based on majority's choice.

**Rafi:** Do they select the jury from different countries?

**Amir Muhammad:** Yes.

**Rafi:** Can you give us any tips for upcoming and budding film makers of Bangladesh? For those who want submit their films?

**Amir Muhammad:** I don't know what the criteria are to be selected for the festival. But I think people shouldn't make films for competition. One of the most impres-



sive films I saw last year was "Live from Dhaka". It was from Bangladesh, of course. I am really happy it is here this year. Filmmakers should make the kind of films people want to see and those that make you think should be there and no one else is making.

**Rafi:** Would like to share with us about your next project?

**Amir Muhammad:** The project has a connection with Bangladesh (laughs). I am working with Saad. Even though haven't discussed this yet in person and only through email. I have to keep it a surprise. Hopefully we will start showing it by the end of this year at a few places.

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Interviewed by Rafi Hossain

## "We have a big lineup of things happening at the festival" - Bianca Taal

*Bianca Taal is the Head of Development Program at the International Film Festival at Rotterdam. We caught with her for a small chat.*

**Rafi:** So you have name that sounds kind of Indian.

**Bianca:** It is an Italian name, actually.

**Rafi:** Are you from Italy?

**Bianca:** No (laughs).

**Rafi:** Can you tell us how many programs simultaneously happen at the film festival?

**Bianca:** I believe, the festival as a whole happens to encourage the talents of the young directors and develop themselves. It already shows in the competitions for emerging film makers. We also have dedicated programs for them. One of them, for example, is the Rotterdam Lab which is for producers who also work on an international level. So there is a lot of attention for co-production and how to collaborate with different international parties together.

**Rafi:** If someone wants to join the Rotterdam Lab, what are the criteria they must meet?

**Bianca:** We organize the Rotterdam Lab with various partner organizations. There are different film institutes, festivals and funding bodies who each send us their



producers. So a total a 60 to 70 producers participate but it is not through an open pool of applications. So in order to participate they must apply through a funding body they are acquainted with. That depends on where the producer is from or who the producer is acquainted with in his area.

**Rafi:** How many awards do you give in total for this festival?

**Bianca:** There are different awards for different categories. There are 3 equal awards for short films. There is the 'Hivos Tiger Competition' award for short films which is the headline of the festival. Here, we present 8 new films

and there is one main award and another award to be decided by the jury for special artistic merit. It can be for the camera, sound design, etc. The main award consists of 40,000 euros.

**Rafi:** What other workshops or programs happen here during the festivals?

**Bianca:** We have a big line ups of things happening here at the festival. Currently there is a Masterclass going on by Oliver Assayas on "Personal Shopper", we had Barry Jenkins for "Moonlight". There are also different panel discussions about deep subjects that we are exploring at the festival.

**Rafi:** If we have a joint film festival where we show the films of the festival at Dhaka, what would be your opinion on that?

**Bianca:** It will be wonderful. There will be more exposure of the festival. Bangladeshi people will also get to see many different films. Bangladeshi films will also be able to be a part of the film festival. We will also get more acquainted with the film scene at Bangladesh.

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Interviewed by Rafi Hossain